

~~Top Secret~~

YUGOSLAVIA:

Growing Unrest

Growing public protests are increasing the chances of clashes with security forces and of a government crackdown, particularly in the Slovene republic. [REDACTED]

Labor unrest with antigovernment overtones has intensified in recent days as Belgrade has begun implementing new IMF-imposed austerity measures. More than 10,000 demonstrators marched on the National Assembly in Belgrade last week to protest the austerity measures, corruption, and official incompetence. This week in Slovenia, [REDACTED] nearly 5,000 strikers demanding higher wages disrupted rail and street traffic, attacked a city government building, and called on the federal government to resign. [REDACTED]

About 20,000 Slovenes rallied this week to protest the arrest of two Slovene journalists and an army sergeant. The military, angered by critical articles in the youth press, is holding the three on charges of betraying military secrets. [REDACTED]

Several hundred Albanians from Macedonia held unprecedented protests this week in Belgrade against discrimination by local officials. Ethnic Serbs in Kosovo Province this week submitted a petition against discrimination by Albanians with 50,000 signatures to the National Assembly, according to press reports. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Disorders are at their highest level in recent years, and a miscalculation by protesters or local authorities anywhere in the country may spark violence. The odds are about even that Slovene and other authorities will take some repressive measures, such as bans on public gatherings or controls on the Slovene youth press. The chance of federal police or military units intervening in Slovenia will grow further if Belgrade concludes that regional leaders have lost control. [REDACTED]

Belgrade probably will also try to head off greater unrest that threatens Yugoslav stability by backing down on its more stringent austerity measures in the face of growing strikes and protests. The military may defuse Slovene protests—though still showing toughness—by giving the journalists light sentences. Any ethnic violence in Kosovo and Macedonia probably can be contained quickly by security forces. [REDACTED]

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